

A CENTURY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

Questions for Reflection

- What is the historical timeline of language teaching methodology?
- What is the difference between an *approach* and a *method*?
- How are teaching methods *derived* from a theory of SLA?
- How do methods, in turn, *contribute* to our knowledge of SLA?
- What are the distinguishing characteristics of various methods? Which of those attributes continue to be valid approaches and techniques today?
- How does a *communicative* approach differ from the succession of methods of the twentieth century?

An informative step toward understanding what language teaching is all about is to turn back the clock a little over a hundred years. Looking at the historical cycles and trends that have brought us to the present day will help you analyze the class session you just observed in Chapter 1. For the better part of this chapter we focus on methods as the identifying characteristics of many decades of language teaching efforts. How do methods of teaching reflect various trends of disciplinary thought? How does current research on language learning and teaching help us to distinguish, in our history, between passing fads and “the good stuff”? These are some of the questions we’ll address here.

In Chapter 3, our historical overview culminates in a close look at the current state of the art in language teaching. Above all, you will come to see how language pedagogy is now more aptly characterized by a number of widely researched “approaches” rather than by competing, context-restricted methods. Those approaches will be described in detail, along with some of the current professional jargon associated with it.

As you read on, you will encounter references to concepts, constructs, issues, and models that are normally covered in a course in second language acquisition (SLA). Whether or not you have already taken or are currently taking such a course, you may wish to consult our companion volume, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Sixth Edition (Brown, 2014), or a book like Mitchell, Myles, and Marsden’s (2013) *Second Language Learning Theories*, which summarizes current topics and issues in SLA. Throughout this book we

will refer occasionally to certain chapters of the *Principles* book (PLLT) for background review or reading.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY METHOD?

For the century spanning the mid-1880s to the mid-1980s, the language-teaching profession may be aptly characterized by a series of methods (or perhaps pedagogical trends) that rose and declined in popularity. Some practitioners in this time period hoped to define the *ultimate* method, one that would be generalizable across widely varying audiences, contexts, and languages (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Historical accounts of the profession tend to describe a succession of methods, each of which was more or less discarded as a new method took its place (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Before turning to that history of language teaching, let’s explain what we mean by **method**.

Over five decades ago Edward Anthony (1963) described method as the second of three hierarchical elements: **An approach**, according to Anthony, was a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. **Method** was described as an overall plan for systematic presentation of a language course based on a selected approach. **Techniques** were the specific activities manifested in a curriculum that were consistent with a method and therefore were in harmony with an approach as well.

In Anthony’s terms, a teacher may, for example, at the approach level, affirm the ultimate importance of learning in a relaxed state of mental awareness just above the threshold of consciousness. The method that follows might resemble Suggestopedia (a description follows in this chapter). Techniques could include playing baroque music while reading a passage in the foreign language, getting students to sit in the yoga position while listening to a list of words, or having learners adopt a new name in the classroom and role-play that new person.

Today, Anthony’s (1963) terms are still in relatively common use among language teachers, but with a multitude of varying definitions. Just two decades after Anthony’s publication, for example, Richards and Rodgers (1982) proposed to call Anthony’s method a *design*, and his technique a *procedure*. They still maintained the importance of the “interrelation of theory and practice” (p. 154), in which assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning lay at the foundation of classroom practice, but the terminology, in some ways, only muddled the waters.

What followed were a few decades of arguments about the irrelevance of methods in the “narrow, pejorative sense” (Bell, 2007, p. 141) in which they were touted in the 1960s and 1970s. Eventually, with the proclamation of a **postmethod era**, language teachers were encouraged to focus on a “pedagogy of particularity” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538), that is, a sensitivity to learners, goals, context, and social milieu.

Then even more recently, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), were quite comfortable with using the term method to mean “a coherent set of principles

By the late nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the **Grammar Translation Method**. There was little to distinguish Grammar Translation from centuries-long foreign language teaching practices beyond a focus on grammatical rules as the basis for translating from the second to the native language. Remarkably, the Grammar Translation Method withstood attempts at the turn of the twentieth century to “reform” language-teaching methodology (see below), and to this day it is practiced in too many educational contexts. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979, p. 3) listed major characteristics of Grammar Translation:

Characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method

- Classes are taught in the students’ L1.
- Attention is given to lists of isolated vocabulary and grammar rules.
- Reading is given almost exclusive focus, with related grammatical analysis.
- Translation exercises (usually from the L2 to the L1) are performed.
- Little or no attention is given to oral production.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Have you taken a language course that followed, even partially, Grammar Translation methodology? If so, how successful were you in learning the language? Why or why not? If not, can you imagine any “redeeming” value in Grammar Translation methodology in today’s language courses?

It’s ironic that this method has until very recently been so stalwart among many competing models. It is “remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6). On the other hand, one can understand why Grammar Translation remains attractive. It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct, can be objectively scored, and don’t require fluent knowledge of the L2 by the test designer or teacher.

However, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) pointed out, “it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory” (p. 7). As you continue to examine language-teaching methodology in this book, you will understand more fully the “theorylessness” of the Grammar Translation Method.

Gouin’s Series Method

The history of “modern” foreign language teaching may be said to have begun in the late 1800s with François Gouin, a French teacher of Latin with remarkable insights. History doesn’t normally credit Gouin as a founder of language-teaching methodology because, at the time, his influence was overshadowed by that of Maximilian Berlitz, the popular German founder of the Direct Method. Nevertheless, some attention to Gouin’s unusually perceptive observations about language teaching helps us to set the stage for the development of language-teaching methods for the century following the publication of his book, *The Art of Learning and Studying Foreign Languages*, in 1880.

Gouin had to go through a very painful set of experiences in order to derive his insights. Having decided in mid-life to learn German, he took up residency in Hamburg for one year. But rather than attempting to converse with the natives, he decided upon arrival in Hamburg to memorize a German grammar book and a table of the 248 irregular German verbs—all in the isolation of his room! He did this in a matter of only ten days, and hurried to “the academy” (the university) to test his new knowledge. “But alas!” he wrote, “I could not understand a single word, not a single word!” (Gouin, 1880, p. 11). Undaunted, he memorized his grammar and verbs, only to fail again.

In the course of the year in Germany, Gouin memorized books, translated Goethe and Schiller, and even memorized 30,000 words in a German dictionary, all in the isolation of his room, only to be crushed by his failure to understand German afterward. Only once did he try to “make conversation” as a method, but this caused people to laugh at him, and he was too embarrassed to continue that method. At the end of the year Gouin, having reduced the Classical Method to absurdity, was forced to return home, a failure.

But there was a happy ending. After returning home, Gouin discovered that his three-year-old nephew had, during that year, gone through the wonderful stage of child language acquisition in which he went from saying virtually nothing at all to becoming a veritable chatterbox of French. How was it that this little child succeeded so easily, in a first language, in a task that Gouin, in a second language, had found impossible? The child must hold the secret to learning a language! So Gouin spent a great deal of time observing his nephew and other children and came to the conclusion that language is a means of thinking and of representing reality!

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

From what you know about child (L1) language acquisition, what are some of the key characteristics of child language acquisition? What attributes of that process do you think are directly applicable to *adult* L2 classes? Which aspects are not plausibly applicable?

So Gouin set about devising a teaching method that would follow from these insights. And thus the **Series Method** was created, a method that taught learners *directly* (without translation) and conceptually (without grammatical rules and explanations) a “series” of connected sentences that are easy to perceive. The first lesson of a foreign language taught a series of linked sentences such as “I walk to the door. I stop at the door. I stretch out my arm. I take hold of the handle.” And other sentences followed, all with an unconventionally large number of grammatical properties, vocabulary items, word orders, and complexity. This is no simple lesson! Yet Gouin was successful with such lessons because the language was easily understood, stored, recalled, and related to reality.

Unfortunately, Gouin was a man ahead of his time, and his brilliant insights were largely lost in the shuffle of Berlitz’s popular Direct Method. But as we look back now over more than a century of language-teaching history, we can appreciate the contributions of this most unusual language teacher.

The Direct Method

Either the world wasn’t ready for the Series Method or Gouin wasn’t a good businessman. So it took none other than contemporary Maximilian Berlitz (1887) to capitalize (literally) on naturalistic approaches to language learning in the form of the now well-known **Direct Method**. The basic premise of the Direct Method was that foreign language learning should be more like first language learning—lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 12) summarized the principles of the Direct Method.

Characteristics of the Direct Method

- Instruction was conducted exclusively (directly) in the L2.
- Oral communication and listening skills were taught in small classes.
- Methodology consisted mainly of modeling and practice.
- Everyday, easily identified vocabulary was used.
- Grammar was taught inductively.

The Direct Method enjoyed considerable popularity in the United States and Europe at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As its popularity increased, it soon became known as the Berlitz Method, and to this day “Berlitz” is a household word with language schools thriving in every country of the world. Today, from Bucharest to Beijing to Buenos Aires, little storefront Berlitz language schools—teaching every conceivable language—can be found with ease.

Despite its success in private enterprise, the Direct Method did not take well in public education, where the constraints of budget, classroom size, time, and teacher background made such a method difficult to use. Moreover, its success may have been more a factor of the skill and personality of the teacher than of the methodology itself. So, for public education worldwide, the Direct Method was not as practical as Grammar Translation or methods that only emphasized reading skills.

The Audiolingual Method

Up through the middle of the twentieth century, Grammar Translation and reading methods prevailed in educational institutions worldwide, with few if any attempts to teach oral communication (Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985). Then, in an ironic twist, one of the most visible of all language teaching “revolutions” in the modern era, the **Audiolingual Method** (ALM), burst into the headlines. Ironic, because much of the ALM borrowed tenets of the then half-century-old Direct Method!

An offshoot of what started as a United States military-sponsored program during World War II to teach oral proficiency in other languages, the ALM spread into broader educational contexts as a means to teach long neglected aural/oral skills. Characteristic of these courses was a great deal of oral activity—pronunciation drills, pattern practice, and exercises in rudimentary conversations—with virtually none of the grammar and translation found in traditional classes. By the 1950s the ALM—in a variety of offshoots that highlighted oral-aural activity—was widely used globally (Rivers, 1964) as air transportation “shrank” the world and ushered in an era of convenient travel, a greater awareness of other languages and cultures, and an immediate communicative use for foreign languages.

The ALM was firmly grounded in the linguistic and psychological theory of the era. Structural linguists of the 1940s and 1950s were engaged in what they claimed was a “scientific descriptive analysis” of various languages. Teachers and course developers saw a direct application of such analysis to the pattern practice drills that were the hallmark of the University of Michigan’s English Language Institute (Fries, 1945). At the same time, behavioral psychologists advocated conditioning and habit-formation models of learning that were perfectly married with the “mim-mem” (mimicry-memorization) drills of audiolingual methodology.

The characteristics of the ALM may be summed up in the following characteristics (adapted from Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979).

Characteristics of the Audiolingual Method

- Most language material was presented directly, with as little use of the students' L1 as possible.
- New material was usually presented in (spoken) dialogue form.
- Mimicry, memorization, and overlearning of language patterns were emphasized, with an effort to get students to produce error-free utterances.
- Grammatical structures were sequenced by means of contrastive analysis.
- Grammar and vocabulary were taught by inductive analogy and contextualized in dialogs.
- Great importance was attached to pronunciation.
- Courses capitalized on the use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Have you experienced ALM-type drills in language courses that you have taken? Were they effective? Did you ever feel they were overused? Judging from your experiences learning or teaching an L2, how much drilling do you think is appropriate to use in a classroom? What aspects of SLA does drilling help to reinforce?

For a number of reasons, the ALM enjoyed many years of popularity, and even to this day, adaptations of the ALM are found in contemporary methodologies. For example, many language courses advocate occasional, quick repetition drills to acquaint students with the phonology of the L2. The ALM was firmly rooted in respectable theoretical perspectives of the time. And "success" could be overtly experienced by students as they practiced dialogs in off-hours.

But the popularity was not to last forever. In an eloquent book-length criticism, Rivers (1964) exposed numerous misconceptions of the ALM and cited its ultimate failure to teach long-term communicative proficiency. We discovered that language was not really acquired through a process of habit formation and overlearning, that errors were not necessarily to be avoided at all costs, and that structural linguistics did not tell us everything about language that we needed to know. But in the shifting sands of methodological change, language teachers ultimately reaped some positive benefits from the ALM.

THE "DESIGNER" METHODS ERA

One benefit was a collective challenge to the profession to inject new life into language classrooms full of weary students reciting endless drills, sometimes with no awareness whatsoever of the meaning of their "prefabricated patterns." The profession needed some spice and verve, and innovative minds from the mid-1960s to the 1970s were up to the challenge.

This time period was historically significant on two counts. First, perhaps more than at other moment in modern language-teaching history, research on second language learning and teaching grew from an offshoot of linguistics into a discipline in its own right. As more and more scholars specialized in SLA studies, our knowledge of how people learn languages inside and outside the classroom mushroomed. Second, in a spirited atmosphere of pioneering research, a number of innovative methods were conceived. These "designer" methods, to borrow a term from Nunan (1989a, p. 97), soon were marketed by entrepreneurs as the latest (and greatest?) applications of the multidisciplinary research findings of the day.

Today, as we look back at these methods, we can applaud their creators for innovative flair, for an attempt to rouse the language-teaching world out of its audiolingual slumber, and for stimulation of even more research as we sought to discover why they were, in the end, *not* the godsend that their inventors and marketers hoped they would be. The scrutiny that the designer methods underwent has enabled us today to refine current communicative approaches to language teaching.

Community Language Learning

In the 1950s, psychologist Carl Rogers (1951) proposed a "person-centered" view of education that placed the focus on *learners*, in opposition to the teacher-centered viewpoints that had dominated educational philosophy. Inspired by Rogers, Charles Curran (1972, 1976) regarded students as a *community* of learners and raised our awareness of the social dynamics of classrooms. As students and teacher joined together in a *team* effort, participants lowered their defenses and potential anxiety by means of a supportive classroom community. The key was for teachers not to be perceived as a threat, but rather, as *counselors*, to assist learners to reach their goals in a non-defensive atmosphere. Curran's Counseling-Learning model of education was extended to language learning contexts in the form of **Community Language Learning (CLL)**.

While particular adaptations of CLL were numerous (LaForge, 1971), the basic methodology was explicit. The group of *clients* (for instance, beginning learners of English), having first established in their native language (say, Japanese) an interpersonal relationship and trust, are seated in a circle with the counselor (teacher) on the outside of the circle. When one of the clients wishes to say something to the group or to an individual, he or she says it in the native language

(Japanese) and the counselor translates the utterance back to the learner in the second language (English). The learner then repeats the English sentence as accurately as possible. Another client responds, in Japanese; the utterance is translated by the counselor into English; the client repeats it, and the conversation continues. If possible, the conversation is recorded for later listening, and at the end of each session, the learners inductively attempt together to glean information about the new language. If desirable, the counselor might take a more directive role and provide some explanation of certain linguistic rules or items.

Affectively, CLL was an attempt to put the philosophy of Carl Rogers into action and to overcome some of the threatening affective factors in a language classroom: the all-knowing teacher, making blunders in the L2 in front of classmates, competing against peers. The counselor allowed the learner to determine the topic and tenor of conversation and to analyze the foreign language inductively. And in some cases learners ended up spontaneously helping each other.

There were some practical and theoretical problems with CLL. The counselor-teacher could become too nondirective, leaving the student to a time-consuming and sometimes fruitless struggle. While some intense inductive processing is a beneficial component of SLA, the initial grueling days and weeks of floundering in CLL might have been alleviated by a more directive approach. And the success of CLL depended largely on the translation expertise of the counselor. A mistranslation could lead to unnecessary confusion.

Today, virtually no one uses CLL in a language curriculum. It was soon discovered that CLL was far too restrictive for institutional language programs. However, the principles of forming a classroom community, learning by discovery, creating student-centered classrooms, and developing student autonomy all remain viable in their application to language classrooms. As is the case with virtually any method, the theoretical underpinnings of CLL may be creatively adapted to your own situation.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

In language classes that you have taken, to what extent did you feel threatened by the teacher or by your classmates? How do you think a teacher could lessen or soften those threats? On the other hand, would you like to learn a language completely inductively in a CLL classroom? In a context that you're familiar with, what would you think might be problematic in using CLL?

Suggestopedia

Other new methods of the era were not quite as strictly affective as CLL. **Suggestopedia**, for example, was a method that was derived from Bulgarian psychologist Georgi Lozanov's (1979) contention that the human brain could

process great quantities of material if given the right conditions for learning, among which are a state of relaxation and giving over of control to the teacher.

Drawing on insights from Soviet psychological research on extrasensory perception and from yoga, Lozanov's *Suggestopedia* (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 71) prefer to call it *Desuggestopedia*) capitalized on relaxed states of mind for maximum retention of material. Music, especially Baroque music with its 60 beats per minute and its specific rhythm, created the kind of "relaxed concentration" that led to efficient retention due to an increase in alpha brain waves and a decrease in blood pressure and pulse rate.

In applications of Suggestopedia to L2 learning, Lozanov and his followers experimented with the presentation of vocabulary, readings, dialogs, roleplays, drama, and a variety of other typical classroom activities. These "concert sessions" were carried out in soft, comfortable seats, accompanied by soft music that induced relaxed states of consciousness.

Suggestopedia was criticized on a number of fronts. Suggestopedia became a business enterprise of its own, and it made promises in the advertising world that were not completely supported by research. Scovel (1979) questioned the validity of Lozanov's data, which reported astounding results. The practicality of using Suggestopedia was an issue in settings where music and comfortable chairs were not available. More serious was the reliance on memorization for language learning (Scovel, 1979) during the concert sessions.

On the other hand, other researchers, including Schiffler (1992), offered a more moderate position, advocating the advantage of states of relaxation for learning. In the final analysis, through this method we may have been prodded to believe in the power of the human brain, to experiment with induced states of relaxation in the classroom, and more specifically to try using music as a way to get students to sit back and relax.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

How might you see aspects of Suggestopedia applied to an L2 course that you have taken, or taught, or might some day teach? Besides music, what are some other ways to induce states of relaxation in a classroom? To what extent is it worth trying such techniques in a classroom?

The Silent Way

Like Suggestopedia, the **Silent Way** rested on more cognitive than affective arguments for its theoretical sustenance. While founder Caleb Gattegno was said to be interested in a "humanistic" approach (Chamot & McKeon, 1984, p. 2) to education, much of the Silent Way was characterized by a problem-solving

approach to learning. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 81) summarized the theory of learning behind the Silent Way as the facilitation of learning through:

- encouraging inductive learning by discovery
- engaging in problem solving, using new language material
- relating (mediating) physical objects to the new language

Discovery learning, a popular educational trend of the 1960s (Bruner, 1961), advocated less learning “by being told” and more learning by discovering for oneself various facts and principles. Ausubel’s (1968) subsumption theory (*PLLT*, Chapter 4) could also be said to underlie Silent Way methodology. Gattegno (1972) believed that learners should develop independence, autonomy, and responsibility. At the same time, learners in a Silent Way classroom had to cooperate with each other in the process of solving language problems. And for physical props, the Silent Way typically utilized a set of small colored rods of varying lengths and a series of colorful wall charts.

Oddly, the teacher was silent much of the time, thus the name of the method. Teachers were to resist their instinct to spell everything out in black and white and to come to the aid of students at the slightest downfall. They had to “get out of the way” while students worked out solutions. The teacher provided single-word stimuli or short phrases and sentences, once or maybe twice, and then the students refined their understanding of meanings and pronunciation among themselves, with minimal corrective feedback from the teacher.

In one sense, the Silent Way was too harsh a method and the teacher too distant to encourage a communicative atmosphere. Silent Way practitioners often found that students needed more guidance and overt correction than the method advocated. And because the rods and charts wore thin after a few lessons, teachers ended up introducing other materials, at which point the Silent Way classroom looked like any other language classroom.

And yet, some underlying principles of the Silent Way were valid. All too often we’re tempted as teachers to provide everything for our students, neatly served up on a silver platter. We could benefit from injecting healthy doses of discovery learning into our classroom activities and from providing less teacher talk than we usually do to let the students work things out on their own. In recent years, for example, we have come to appreciate the value of students’ self-correction stimulated by a teacher’s feedback (Ellis & Collins, 2009).

Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach

You will recall from earlier in this chapter that well over a century ago, Gouin designed his Series Method on the premise that language associated with a series of simple actions will be easily retained by learners. Much later, psychologists developed the “trace theory” of learning in which it was claimed that memory is increased if it is stimulated, or “traced,” through association with

motor activity. It was this very idea that James Asher (1977) capitalized on in developing the **Total Physical Response (TPR)**.

TPR drew in part on principles of child language acquisition, namely, that children learning their L1 appear to do a lot of listening before they speak, and that their listening is accompanied by physical responses (reaching, grabbing, moving, looking, and so forth). Asher was also convinced that language classes were often the locus of too much anxiety, so he wished to devise a method that was as stress-free as possible, where learners would not feel overly self-conscious and defensive. The TPR classroom, then, was one in which students did a great deal of listening and acting.

Typically, TPR heavily utilized imperatives, even into more advanced proficiency levels: *Open the window, Close the door, Stand up, Pick up the book, Give it to John*, and so on. More complex syntax could be injected: *Draw a rectangle on the chalkboard, Walk quickly to the door and hit it*; or more humorously: *Walk slowly to the window and jump*, (Asher, 1977, p. 55). Interrogatives also were used effectively: *Where is the book? Who is John?* Eventually students would feel comfortable enough to venture verbal responses to questions, then to ask questions themselves, and to continue the process.

The **Natural Approach**, a method undergirded by similar principles, was inspired by Asher’s (1977) advocacy of a *comprehension-based* approach, but developed somewhat later in the early 1980s. Krashen and Terrell (1983) felt that learners would benefit from delaying production until speech “emerges,” that learners should be as relaxed as possible in the classroom, and that a great deal of communication and “acquisition” should take place, as opposed to analysis. Their Natural Approach advocated the use of TPR activities at the beginning level of language learning when “comprehensible input” is essential for triggering the acquisition of language.

The Natural Approach was aimed at developing everyday language communication skills—conversations, shopping, listening to the radio, and the like. The initial task of the teacher was to provide comprehensible input, that is, spoken language that is understandable to the learner or just a little beyond the learner’s level. Learners were not prodded to speak until they feel ready to do so. The teacher was the source of the learners’ input and the creator of an interesting and stimulating variety of classroom activities—commands, games, skits, and small-group work.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Have you ever taken a language course that used TPR or Natural Approach techniques? If so, how effective were they? How would you feel about being in a class in which you were never *asked* by your teacher to speak, and you spoke only when you were ready to do so?

Neither method dominated language classrooms around the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Both seemed to be especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but lost their distinctiveness as learners advanced in their competence. Further, after students overcame the fear of speaking out, classroom conversations and other activities proceeded as in almost any other communicative language classroom. The most controversial aspects of the Natural Approach were its advocacy of a "silent period" (delay of oral production) and its heavy emphasis on comprehensible input (Gibbons, 1985).

On the other hand, like every other method we have encountered, TPR and the Natural Approach offered new insights to the language teaching profession. Basing methods on healthy doses of listening to a new L2 eventually prodded SLA researchers to examine the crucial role of *input* in learning an L2. The de-emphasis on nonstop oral production, a reaction to the ALM, helped us to design language courses with carefully structured *listening comprehension* components. In later proposals for more communicative methods, we saw the importance of meaningful language that students could relate to the real world. And, of course, the *anxiety* experienced by learners in many language courses was a factor that both methods attempted to reduce.

Innovative methods such as the above "designer" methods expose us to principles and practices that you can sift through, weigh, and adapt to multiple contexts. Your responsibility as a teacher is to choose the best of what others have experimented with and then adapt your insights to your own situation. Those insights and intuitions can become a part of your own principled approach to language teaching.

THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA

As the innovative methods of the 1970s were being touted by some and criticized by many, some significant foundations for future growth were being laid in the form of a number of emerging approaches that were built solidly on research findings in what was still the budding new field of SLA. From grassroots SLA conclaves and late night discussions at conferences, the field mushroomed in the 1970s and 1980s into a professional discipline that soon boasted worldwide conferences, presentations in every corner of the earth, and volumes of articles, books, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. Out of this vibrant incipient field of study came some distinctive methodological options that were later to catapult language teachers and researchers into the twenty-first century with principle-based, enduring innovations.

Notional-Functional Syllabuses

One of the most fruitful movements of the late twentieth century was embodied in what came to be known as the **Notional-Functional Syllabus**, or more commonly the **Functional Syllabus**. Beginning with the work of the Council of Europe (Van Ek & Alexander, 1975) and later followed by numerous interpretations of

"notional" syllabuses (Wilkins, 1976), Notional-Functional Syllabuses (NFS) began to be used in the United Kingdom in the 1970s.

The distinguishing characteristics of the NFS were its attention to functions (see *PLLT*, Chapter 9) as the organizing elements of English language curriculum, and its contrast with a structural syllabus in which sequenced grammatical structures served as the organizers. Reacting to methods that attended too strongly to grammatical form, the NFS focused on the pragmatic purposes to which we put language. As such, it was not a method at all. It was closer to what we have called approach, but it was more specifically focused on curricular structure than any of its predecessors.

Notions, according to Van Ek and Alexander (1975), are both general and specific. General notions are abstract concepts such as existence, space, time, quantity, and quality. They are domains in which we use language to express thought and feeling. Within the general notion of space and time, for example, are the concepts of location, motion, dimension, speed, length of time, and frequency. *Specific notions* correspond more closely to what we have become accustomed to calling "situations." Personal identification, for example, is a specific notion under which name, address, phone number, and other personal information are subsumed. Other specific notions include travel, health and welfare, education, shopping, services, and free time.

The *functional* part of the NFS corresponded to language functions. Curricula were organized around such functions as identifying, reporting, denying, accepting, declining, asking permission, and apologizing. Van Ek and Alexander listed some seventy different language functions.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

One of the challenges of the NFS was finding the appropriate *sequence* of functions in a curriculum that stretched across possibly many weeks. What kinds of criteria can you think of that would underlie a sequence? Frequency of occurrence? Usefulness? Grammatical complexity? Intuition? How might such criteria vary depending on the *context* of the L2 class?

The NFS quickly provided popular underpinnings for the development of communicative textbooks and materials in English language courses. The functional basis of language programs has continued to the present day. In Saslow and Ascher's (2011) *Top Notch* series, for example, the following functions are covered in the first several lessons of a beginner's textbook:

- Introducing self and other people
- Exchanging personal information
- Asking how to spell someone's name

- Asking about the location of places
- Giving and getting directions
- Identifying and describing people
- Talking about time

A typical unit in textbooks like this includes a blend of conversation practice with a classmate, interactive group work, role-plays, grammar and pronunciation focus exercises, information-gap techniques, Internet activities, and extra class interactive practice.

The NFS was, strictly speaking, a curriculum. While it was clearly a precursor to Communicative Language Teaching (see below), as a curriculum (syllabus) it still presented language as an *inventory* of functional units. Therefore, the danger that the NFS could simply be “structural lamb served up as notional-functional mutton” (Campbell, 1978, p. 18) was ever-present. However, the NFS set the stage for bigger and better things. By attending to the functional purposes of language, and by providing contextual (notional) settings for the realization of those purposes, it provided a link between a dynasty of methods that were declining and a new era of language teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching

In 1972, Dell Hymes published an essay on **communicative competence**, which may have been the coining of the now household phrase in SLA. Almost a decade later, Canale and Swain (1980) delivered their seminal 50-page treatise on the theoretical bases of communicative competence (CC). In brief, they proposed four major components of CC (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983):

Canale and Swain's (1980) Components of Communicative Competence

- **Grammatical.** Knowledge of and ability to use the forms of language.
- **Discourse.** Knowledge of and ability to comprehend and produce stretches of language across sentences in both oral and written modes.
- **Sociolinguistic.** Applying sociocultural contexts to communication, including participants' roles, information they share, and the function of a communicative act.
- **Strategic.** Use of verbal and nonverbal tactics to accomplish a communicative goal, including compensation for breakdowns.

About that same time a cluster of publications spelled out the practical ramifications of a communicative approach to language teaching (Widdowson, 1978; Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981;

Savignon, 1983). Soon **Communicative Language Teaching** (CLT) was a byword in language teaching. With these and a plethora of other publications, the language teaching profession was to undergo a slow but solid revolution—from grasping at a method here and there to a research-based, **virtually universal understanding of basic tenets of effective communicative language pedagogy**.

Today CLT continues to be recognized globally as what is best described as a broadly based **approach** (not a method) to language teaching that interweaves a cluster of principles and foundation stones of SLA. CLT extends beyond the merely grammatical elements of communication into the social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. It is an approach that encourages “real-life” communication in the classroom. It aims to develop linguistic fluency, and not just the accuracy that once consumed its methodological predecessors. CLT promotes classroom practices that equip students with tools for **generating unrehearsed language performance** “out there” when they leave the womb of the classroom. CLT seeks to facilitate lifelong language learning among students that extends well beyond classroom activities. **Learners are partners in a cooperative venture**. And CLT-based classroom practices seek to intrinsically spark learners to reach their fullest potential.

It is difficult to offer a formal definition of an approach as all-encompassing as CLT. From the earlier seminal works in CLT (cited above) up to more recent work (Savignon, 2005, 2007; Harmer, 2007; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Ur, 2012; Brown, 2014; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014) we have interpretations enough to send us reeling. For the sake of simplicity and directness, in the chart below we offer seven interconnected characteristics as a description of CLT, drawn from all the above sources:

Characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching

1. **Overall goals.** CLT suggests a focus on *all* of the components (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational (grammatical, discourse) aspects of language with the pragmatic (sociolinguistic, strategic) aspects.
2. **Relationship of form and function.** Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but remain as important components of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. **Fluency and accuracy.** A focus on students' “flow” of comprehension and production and a focus on the formal accuracy of production are seen as complementary principles.

At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use. At other times the student will be encouraged to attend to correctness. Part of the teacher's responsibility is to offer appropriate corrective feedback on learners' errors.

4. **Focus on real-world contexts.** Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. **Autonomy and strategic involvement.** Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through raising their awareness of their own styles (strengths, weaknesses, preferences) of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for production and comprehension. Such awareness and action will help to develop autonomous learners capable of continuing to learn the language beyond the classroom and the course.
6. **Teacher roles.** The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing font of knowledge. The teacher is an empathetic "coach" who values the best interests of students' linguistic development. Students are encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with other students and with the teacher.
7. **Student roles.** Students are active participants in their own learning process. Learner-centered, cooperative, collaborative learning is emphasized, but not at the expense of appropriate teacher-centered activity.

These seven characteristics underscore some major departures from earlier methods and approaches. Structurally (grammatically) sequenced curricula were a mainstay of language teaching for centuries. CLT suggests that grammatical structure might better be subsumed under various pragmatic categories. A great deal of use of authentic language is implied in CLT, as learners attempt to build fluency—but not at the expense of a healthy focus on accuracy. In communicative classrooms, students are encouraged to deal with unrehearsed situations under the guidance, but not control, of the teacher. The importance of learners' developing a strategic approach to acquisition is a turnabout from earlier methods that never broached the topic of strategies-based instruction. And, finally, a teacher's facilitative role and students' collaborative roles in CLT are the product of two decades or more of slowly recognizing the importance of learner initiative in the classroom.

CLT has not been without some drawbacks. The authenticity implied in CLT continues to pose challenges for non-native speaking teachers whose own

ability may be less than fluent (Kramsch, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). However, with more widespread current access to technological media (video, television, audio, Internet, computer software, smart phones, and the social media), both teachers and students can benefit from language input well beyond the teacher and (printed) course material.

A related criticism of CLT centered on its "Western" origins and questions about its relevance in non-Western cultures, especially those in which nondirective, student-centered cooperative learning might be quite alien (Bax, 2003; Harmer, 2007). In recent years, however, a whole host of research from Asian, African, and Middle-Eastern countries has begun to show a positive turn-around from earlier years of skepticism (Littlewood, 2011). Pham (2007) noted that "while teachers in many parts of the world may reject the CLT techniques transferred from the West, it is doubtful that they reject the *spirit* of CLT" (p. 196).

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

What do you think underlies the criticism that CLT is too Western a concept for some cultures? If an educational system presumes the essentially *authoritarian* role of the teacher, do you think CLT necessarily undermines that authority (and power)? How can a teacher still be in *control* of a classroom yet offer collaborative, student-centered activities?

Another issue involves the frequent mismatch between CLT goals and standardized testing, in which the latter does not always successfully incorporate communicative features (McNamara & Roever, 2006). Assessment methods have, over the last two decades or so, qualitatively improved their communicative validity, but many students around the world are still perplexed by having to face the dreaded "examination day" and its discrete-point, grammar-based test questions (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

Finally, one can easily argue that now, after almost half a century of seeing the term CLT incorporated into virtually every language methodology textbook, the term has lost its meaning (Bax, 2003; Harmer, 2003; Spada, 2007). With a multiplicity of definitions coupled with a "postmethod" (See Chapter 3) malaise at the beginning of the twenty-first century, CLT was deemed by some to be too watered down to be a viable construct (Bax, 2003). Others, most notably Littlewood (2011), argued that "the value of CLT as an 'umbrella term' should not be underestimated. . . . CLT still serves as a valuable reminder that the aim of teaching is not to learn bits of language but to improve students' ability to communicate" (p. 542).

Littlewood (2011) then continued with an eloquent case for fruitful research and development within a CLT framework, or what he calls a "transnational ideoscape" in which CLT is not so much a specific set of practices as it is an

“ideational landscape that provides a location for deepening and extending the ‘cosmopolitan conversation’ about second language pedagogy” (p. 552).



Chapter 3 describes many of the manifestations of CLT that have been advocated and used in classrooms over the last few decades. All of these options are in keeping with the spirit of CLT, but are not separate methods. Rather, they address a multiplicity of contexts, situations, and specializations, reflecting the complexity of the “state of the art” as we know it today.

As an aid to your recollection of the characteristics of some of the methods reviewed earlier, you may wish to refer to Table 2.1 (pp. 36–37), in which the various methods described in this chapter are summarized.

Looking back over almost one and a half centuries of meandering history, you can no doubt see the cycles of changing winds and shifting sands alluded to earlier. In this remarkable succession of changes, we learned something in each generation. We did not allow history simply to deposit new dunes exactly where the old ones lay. So our cumulative history has taught us to appreciate the value of “doing” language interactively, of the emotional (as well as cognitive) side of learning, of absorbing language automatically, of consciously analyzing it only when useful and appropriate, and of pointing learners toward the real world where they will use English communicatively.

FOR THE TEACHER: ACTIVITIES (A) & DISCUSSION (D)

Note: For each of the “Classroom Connections” in this chapter, you may wish to turn them into individual or pair-work discussion questions.

1. (D) Because this chapter refers to some basic principles and research findings that are normally covered in a course in second language acquisition (SLA), you may wish to review such material (see Brown, 2014) as you discuss this chapter. For example, varied theories of learning are implied in all the methods just reviewed; the role of affective factors in second language acquisition is highlighted in some methods; conscious and subconscious (or focal and peripheral) processing assumes various roles, depending on the method in question. If you feel that your students encountered concepts or issues that they need to brush up on in order to comprehend this chapter, consider making some time for a thorough review.
2. (A) Ask your students to look back at the lesson observed and described in Chapter 1. Divide the class into pairs, and ask them to brainstorm *any* aspects of the lesson in Chapter 1 that are examples of *any* of the methods described in this chapter—or that they think might have been “inspired” by a method. As they report their findings to the rest of the class, ask them to justify their comparisons. If appropriate, list their findings on the board.

3. (D) Ask the class for specific examples of the three levels of *approach*, *method*, and *technique* in any class activities or tasks that they have recently observed or taught themselves. For example, if they cite a group work information gap exercise that requires small groups to solve a set of problems collaboratively, what principles are at work at the approach level, what if any method is being used, and what specific techniques are used to carry out the task? You might want to list their ideas on the board for further discussion.
4. (D) Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 7) said Grammar Translation “is a method for which there is no theory.” Is this too harsh a judgment? Ask students if they agree with the “theorylessness” of Grammar Translation and to justify their opinion.
5. (A) Consider the Series Method, the Direct Method, and the Audiolingual Method. Assign a different method to each of several small groups. Ask each group to list the theoretical foundations (assumptions about language, learning, and teaching) on which the method rested and share findings with the whole class. Consider listing their responses on the board.
6. (A) Assign the four “designer” methods (CLL, Suggestopedia, the Silent Way, and TPR/Natural Approach) to separate small groups of students. The groups’ task (which may require some extra-class research beyond what is provided in this chapter) is to specify (as much as possible from the information given) the following descriptors (adapted from Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 9) for the method assigned to them:

- a) The overall goals of the method
- b) The roles of teacher and students
- c) The nature of teacher-student and student-student interaction
- d) The ways in which students’ feelings and emotions are handled
- e) The language skills that are emphasized
- f) The role of the native language of students
- g) The way the teacher responds to student errors
- h) The way assessment is accomplished

Each group can then report their findings to the rest of the class. Students may find it useful to see the information in chart form (on the blackboard or developed into a computer-generated chart) like others in this chapter. An alternative to this exercise would be to assign it as extra-class work to be performed by students on their own. In this case, you might assign just *one* method per student.

7. (D) Ask your students to suggest what novel approaches were brought to the L2 teaching profession with the Notional-functional Syllabus. What did Campbell (1978) mean by saying we should beware of “structural lamb served up as notional functional mutton”?

Table 2.1 Characteristics of Methods

Method	Theoretical Foundations	Goals	Learner-Teacher Roles
Grammar-Translation	Classical assumptions about education as a "discipline" Learning a foreign language is the mark of educated persons	Vocabulary memorization Grammar rules Translation of passages Reading proficiency	Teacher as controller
Series and Direct Methods	L2 and L1 learning similarity Meaningful associations	Oral fluency Conversation ability	Teacher-directed Learners respond to modeled language
Audiolingual Method (ALM)	Habit formation through repetition Primacy of oral communication	Oral communication skills Pronunciation Fluency (within limited stretches of discourse)	Highly teacher-directed Learners respond to modeled language Learners practice target language on their own
Community Language Learning (CLL)	Whole-person, counseling-learning model of education Class members bond as a community Inductive learning	Oral communicative proficiency	Teacher is a counselor Teacher is a source of information Learner is a client Learners progress from dependence to independence
Suggestopedia	Relaxed states of consciousness create low anxiety Power of "suggestion"	Oral communication Conversational exchange Reading ability Acquisition of vocabulary	Highly teacher-directed Teacher initiates "concert" sessions and oral models Learners acquire subconsciously
Silent Way	Discovery learning Use of mediating physical objects Problem-solving approach	Oral communication Conversational exchange Reading ability Acquisition of vocabulary	Highly teacher-directed Teacher is mostly "silent" Learners are responsible for initiating clarification questions
Total Physical Response (TPR) and The Natural Approach	L1 and L2 learning are similar Comprehension-based approach Language connects with physical action	Listening comprehension Oral communicative skills	Teacher-directed Learners respond to modeled language Learners collaborate to perform simple routines

Typical Activities	Strengths	Weaknesses
Explaining rules Memorizing vocabulary Translating reading passages	Reading proficiency Become familiar with the written form of a language	No oral practice or fluency Reliance on memorization No SLA research to undergird it
Repeating teacher models Practicing dialogues, whole class	Cognitive associations Real-world relevance Common survival language is practiced	Limited in scope Learner creativity is not encouraged Writing not emphasized
Repeating teacher-modeled prescribed dialogues Oral pattern practice Pronunciation drilling Practicing memorized dialogues in pairs	Emphasis on oral language Building learner confidence Use of taped dialogues provides models	Little room for creativity Emphasis on error-free production Writing/reading not emphasized
Learners initiate desired language in their L1 Teacher provides translation into the L2 Learners request linguistic rules/information	Burden is on the learner to initiate language Learners decide topics Class builds community collaboratively Teacher is a resource	No set curriculum, so progress is dependent on student initiative Tedious, trial-and-error process Overly nondirective
"Concert" session with music in background Learners listen quietly in state of relaxation Repetition drills, role plays, dialogue practice	Low-anxiety situations Relaxation states offer optimal reception Appreciation of literary texts	Highly structured curriculum Over-reliance on assumptions about relaxation Wears thin after the first few weeks
Teacher modeling of target language items Use of colored objects, charts, diagrams Learners collaborate to refine understanding	Learning by discovery facilitates autonomy & collaboration Learners are not "spoon fed"	Teacher can become too distant Tedious, trial-and-error process Wears thin after the first few weeks
Imperative commands given to learners Learners respond with actions Role plays	Low-anxiety situations Physical-linguistic connections Learners not forced to speak too early Community building	Advocacy of "silent period" Overemphasis on physical actions, imperatives Wears thin after the first few weeks

8. (A) Ask pairs to look at the seven features used as a general definition of CLT in the list on page 31 and to brainstorm some practical classroom examples of each of the seven factors. Should any characteristics be added to the list? Or changed?
9. (A) Have students observe an ESL class and use the seven characteristics of CLT as a gauge of how closely the lesson approximates CLT. Ask students to share their observations in small groups.
10. (D) Ask students to review the cycles of “shifting sands” since Gouin’s time. Table 2.1 on pages 36–37 may help to refresh memories. How did each new method borrow from previous practices? What did each reject in previous practices? On the board, you might reconstruct the historical progression in the form of a time line with characteristics listed for each “era.” If time permits, try to determine what the prevailing *social*, *intellectual*, and *political* mood was when certain methods were flowering. For example, the ALM was a product of a post-WWII military training program and flourished during an era when scientific solutions to all problems were diligently sought. Are there some logical connections here?

FOR YOUR FURTHER READING

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Both volumes offer detailed summaries of the methods described in the present chapter. They analyze each method with a focus on teacher goals, roles of the teacher, the nature of student-teacher interaction, undergirding theories of language and culture, assessment, and other topics.

Wilkins, D. (1976). *Notional syllabuses*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

An informative historical perspective on the early conception of the Notional-Functional Syllabus, precursor to CLT.

Brumfit, C., & Johnson, K. (1979). *The communicative approach to language teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Littlewood, W. (2011). Communicative language teaching: an expanding concept for a changing world. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Volume II* (pp. 541–557). New York, NY: Routledge.

A perspective on CLT is offered in the form of Brumfit and Johnson’s detailed summary of communicative principles and practice in 1979, then in more recent reflections by Littlewood in 2011. You will note some interesting developments over the 30 years in between.

CONTEXTUALIZING COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES

Questions for Reflection

- What does the concept of “postmethod” imply in a historical context?
- Why has the dichotomizing of “theory” and “practice” been dysfunctional?
- What does it mean to be an “informed eclectic” in choosing and evaluating techniques for a communicative L2 course?
- What are the characteristics and contexts of a variety of *general* communicative approaches to methodology?
- What are some of the more *specific* contexts in which communicative approaches apply?

The history of language teaching described in the previous chapter, characterized by a succession of methodological milestones, had changed its course by the mid-1980s. Ironically, the methods that were such strong signposts of a century-old history were no longer the benchmarks that they once were. The profession had learned some profound lessons from its past journeys.

We became cognizant of the paramount importance of incorporating a *communicative component* into our language courses. We had learned to be cautiously eclectic in making informed choices of teaching practices that were solidly grounded in the best of what we knew about L2 learning and teaching. And perhaps more importantly, we became acutely aware of a multiplicity of *contexts* for L2 teaching, which brought with it myriad adaptations, applications, and localized approaches—all within the spirit of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

A look back today over several decades of these communicative approaches, techniques, and related research boggles the mind! In a mushrooming of research and classroom practices, we seem to have addressed every imaginable audience, age, proficiency level, and special purpose for L2 learning. And we have not ignored the importance of localizing language teaching to country, institution, socioeconomic level, political motive, and social-psychological variables at play in the teaching-learning dialogue.

In this chapter we’ll address a good deal of this contextualization of language teaching by examining a variety of *methodological options* within the

framework communicative approaches. Of course, in the process, we may omit one or two of your favorites, but we will at least have provided a picture of the amazing diversity of this field!

But first, let's take a look at the philosophical foundations undergirding the many manifestations of CLT approaches since the mid-1980s.

THE POSTMETHOD CONDITION

We seem to have an infatuation with "post" conditions, perhaps an indication of the human yearning to "get over" our past and look optimistically into the future. You may have heard enough about post-colonial, post-modern, post-structural, post-behavioral, post-cognitive, and even *post-linguistic* (Nelson & Kern, 2012) conditions, and more! But there is one more "post" condition that we cannot ignore here.

The notion of a **postmethod** era of language teaching was a concept that arose around the turn of the twenty-first century that described the need to put to rest the limited concept of method as it was used in the previous century. David Nunan (1991b), noting that there may never be a "method for all," summed it up nicely: "The focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself" (p. 228).

Kumaravadivelu (2001) was even more specific in calling for a "pedagogy of particularity," that is, being "sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular social milieu" (2006, p. 538). Others (Brown, 1993; Clarke, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) had earlier expressed the need for soundly conceived pedagogical approaches that attended to the particularities of contexts.

Was the proclamation of a postmethod condition merely a matter of semantic quibbling? Maybe. Bell (2003) astutely observed that we have too many definitions attached to the word method, and attempted to clear the muddied waters by differentiating method with a lowercase *m*, any of a wide variety of classroom practices, from Method with an uppercase *M*, "a fixed set of classroom practices that serve as a prescription" (p. 326). What are we to make of the confusion? Happily, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), among others, remain comfortable with maintaining the notion of methods (with a small *m*) as long as we are clear about the referent.

So perhaps by now the profession has attained a modicum of maturity where we recognize that the diversity of language learners in multiple world-wide contexts demands an eclectic blend of tasks, each tailored for a specified group of learners studying for particular purposes in geographic, social, and political contexts.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Imagine a language course that announced it was following a particular method, let's say, TPR or Suggestopedia. In such a course, how *different* would the actual adaptation of that method be across varying contexts? For example, a "traditional" teacher-centered institution or system versus a school that had more "open" definitions of teacher roles? Children versus adults? Academic language versus survival skills?

THE DYSFUNCTION OF THE THEORY-PRACTICE DICHOTOMY

The now discarded concept of Method (with a capital *M*) as a discrete set of unified techniques designed to apply to multiple contexts, carried with it, in some opinions (Clarke, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2006a), an implicit assumption about the relationship between what we have customarily called "theory" and "practice." *Theory*, in both philosophical and scientific inquiry, implies an organized set of hypotheses presumed to explain an observed phenomenon. In language teaching, an application of a theory may come in the form of a methodological set of practical options that follow from the theory.

All too often in our history of L2 teaching, we have seen the theory-building part of the formula carried out by researchers who may have been only distantly familiar with the practicalities of classroom teaching. Likewise, the *practice* part of the formula was thought to be the province of classroom teachers who accepted (or rejected) the theorist's pronouncements about the how's and why's of SLA. The relationship between the theorist and practitioner was—and in some cases, still is—similar to that of a producer of goods and a consumer.

Mark Clarke (1994) eloquently argued against such a relationship in analyzing the *dysfunction* of the theory-practice relationship. He and others since then (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2006a; Larsen-Freeman, 2012) offered strong arguments against perpetuating this "misleading dualism" (Hedgcock, 2002, p. 308). Not only does such an understanding promote the notion of "a privileged class of theorists and an underprivileged class of practitioners," (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, p. 166), but it also connotes a separation of researchers and teachers, and at worst, a one-way communication line from the former to the latter.

Recent work in the language teaching profession shows a marked departure from the artificial dichotomy of theory and practice (Murphy & Byrd,

2001; McKay, 2006; Alsagoff et al., 2012; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014; Graves, 2014). In this mode of viewing the profession, teachers *are* researchers and are charged with the responsibility of *reflecting* on their own practice (Murphy, 2014). Calls for “action research” and “classroom-based research” (Bailey, 2014) reflect a new and healthier “reconfiguring [of] the relationship between theorizers and practitioners” (Nelson & Kern, 2012, p. 47).

It has become increasingly inauthentic for researchers with PhDs to generate ideas from the “ivory tower” without experiencing them in person in the classroom. Likewise, more and more teachers are engaging in the process of systematic observation, experimentation, analysis, and reporting of their own experiences in classrooms around the world. More detail on the language teacher as *researcher* is offered in Chapter 22 of this book.

As you continue to read on in this and following chapters, it's important to view yourself as a capable observer of your own and others' practice. You need not think of theorists as people that are removed from the arena of classroom reality, nor of teachers as anything less than essential participants in a dialogue.

AN INFORMED ECLECTIC APPROACH

It should be clear from the foregoing that as both an informed and eclectic teacher, you think in terms of a number of possible pedagogical options at your disposal for tailoring classes to particular contexts. Your *approach*, or rationale for language learning and teaching, therefore takes on great importance. Your approach includes a number of basic principles of learning and teaching (such as those that will be elaborated in Chapter 4) on which you can rely for designing and evaluating classroom lessons. Your approach to language-teaching methodology is a theoretically well-informed global understanding of the process of learning and teaching. It is inspired by the interconnection of all your reading and observing and discussing and teaching, and that interconnection underlies everything that you do in the classroom.

But your approach to language pedagogy is not just a set of static principles “set in stone.” It is, in fact, a dynamic composite of well-informed beliefs that change across time (as you learn more and more about the art of teaching) and that adapt themselves to whatever *situated contexts* in which you are teaching. The interaction between your approach and your classroom practice is the key to effective, authentic teaching.

If you have little or no experience in teaching and are perhaps now in a teacher education program, you may feel you cannot yet describe your own approach to L2 learning and teaching. On the other hand, you might just surprise yourself at the intuitions you already have about pedagogical foundations.

Look at the list below of a number of questions you may need to consider in designing a lesson. On the basis of what you know so far about SLA and teaching, and for a particular context you're familiar with, which side of a continuum of possibilities would you generally lean toward, and why? And what contextual variables might influence a change away from your general inclination?



QUESTIONS TO PONDER IN DESIGNING AND TEACHING L2 LESSONS

1. Should the course focus on meaning or form or both?
2. Will analysis or intuition benefit my students more?
3. As a teacher should I be tough and demanding or gentle and empathetic?
4. Should I directly correct students' errors or try to get them to self-correct?
5. Should a communicative course give more attention to accuracy or fluency?

Were you able to respond to these items? For example, the first item offers a choice between “meaning” and “form” for a focus. While you might lean toward meaning because you know that too much focus on form could detract from communicative acquisition, certain classroom techniques or tasks might demand a focus on formal aspects, such as grammar, phonology, or lexicon. Or your context (say, a test preparation course that helps students to pass a grammar test) might dictate your emphasis.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Suppose you're teaching in an educational context or culture in which teachers must not appear too empathetic lest students lose their respect for you. How would that modify your answer to item #3 above? What other contexts of teaching (age, skill level, culture, purpose) can you think of that would dictate an adaptation of your approach?

If you could make a choice within each item, it indicates that you do indeed have some intuitions about teaching, and perhaps the rudiments of an approach. Your approach is guided by several key factors. Consider the following list.



FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR APPROACH TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

- the particular needs and goals of your students
- your own experience as a learner in classrooms
- whatever teaching experience you may already have had
- classroom observations you have made
- books you have read
- previous courses in the field

But more importantly, if you found that in almost every choice you wanted to add something like “but it depends on . . .,” then you are on the way toward developing an *informed* approach to language learning and teaching. Your approach to language teaching must always account for specific contexts of teaching, or what Kumaravadivelu (2001) called a pedagogy of “particularity,” as mentioned earlier. Rarely can we say with absolute certainty that a methodological set of techniques applies to all learners in all contexts for all purposes.

GENERAL APPROACHES

In the remainder of this chapter we will take you on a “tour” of language teaching options that represent the diversity of L2 pedagogy across the globe. All of our brief “stopovers” provide sketches of methodological approaches that can quite plausibly be subsumed under the rubric of CLT. Moreover, all of the approaches are *current*, in that they are being practiced, in a variety of interpretations, in L2 teaching today.

Some approaches are more *general* in nature: They are being used across many different contexts, countries, institutions, ages, and proficiency levels. Task-based language teaching, for example, is broadly applicable to an enormous variety of contexts. Other approaches are more *specific*: Certain identifiable contextual factors must be present for them to be of utility in a language program. Thus, workplace L2 teaching obviously is limited to a restrictive audience and purpose.

We turn first to the more broadly applicable approaches.

Learner-Centered Instruction

When Gary Adkins walked into the first class hour of his advanced French grammar and reading class as a junior in college, his classmates quietly sat in their seats, stone faced, eyes fixed on the teacher. Professor Bouchard, in silence, sternly eyed the newest student, who took his seat as quickly as possible. Attendance was duly recorded, and with dispatch, the professor described the course, the prerequisites (mainly having completed second-year French), course requirements, and the grading system.

“Any questions?” he asked, still sternly eyeing the students, but nary a person dared to stick a neck out.

“Good. Now open your books to page 3, where you will find our first reading passage. Monsieur Adkins, read the first paragraph aloud.”

Trembling, unprepared, Gary read the paragraph. Quite well, he thought. Professor Bouchard had another opinion.

“Monsieur Adkins, you must read more loudly next time. You mispronounced several words, and you must learn to read with more emphasis. . . . Now, Mademoiselle Allen, translate the first paragraph into English.”

About this time Gary wondered why he had to be born into a family whose name began at the top of the alphabet! Miss Allen had similar thoughts as she stumbled through the translation, with a performance riddled with errors, causing Professor Bouchard to embark on a tirade about the intricacies of the present and past perfect tenses in French. You can imagine how the rest of the class hour went, and how thankful every student was when the bell rang—and how especially thankful were those whose last name began with “z”—they did not have to “recite” on this day!

Teacher-centered instruction has been with us for centuries, if not millennia. The teacher controls everything; students speak only when asked to; the teacher is an authority who is not to be questioned. But around the middle of the twentieth century, this model began to erode as educators probed new models of pedagogy. In the words of Weimer (2013), students “needed to find their way past self-doubt, awkwardness, and the fear of failure to a place where they could ask a question in class, make a contribution to a group, and speak coherently in front of peers” (p. 5). By the end of the twentieth century, **learner-centered instruction** was a catchword for a new model of education across many disciplines. Language teaching soon proved to be an ideal subject matter to put the forward-thinking model into practice, as aptly demonstrated in Nunan’s (1988) manual describing curriculum design that incorporated collaboration between student and teacher.

Learner-centered instruction turned teacher-centered models “upside down” by playing down the all-knowing, authoritative role of the teacher, and giving opportunities to students to participate in a classroom without fear of being scolded or belittled by a teacher. Some of the hallmarks of learner-centered teaching included the following:

Characteristics of Learner-Centered Instruction

- a focus on learners' needs and goals
- understanding individual differences among learners in a classroom
- gauging the curriculum to learners' styles and preferences
- creating a supportive, nonfearful, nondefensive atmosphere
- offering students choices in the types and content of activities
- giving some control to the student (e.g., group work)

Because language teaching often presupposes a classroom where students have very little language proficiency with which to *negotiate* with the teacher, teachers may be wary of giving learners the "power" associated with a learner-centered approach. Such reluctance may not be necessary for two reasons. First, by conducting a formal or informal *needs assessment* at the beginning of a course, teachers can be relatively well-directed in the first few sessions of a class. Second, even in beginning level classes, teachers can still adhere to the goals of a curriculum while giving students opportunities to "try out" language.

In learner-centered classrooms, teachers are not being asked to relinquish *all* control, only to allow for student innovation, creativity, and eventually their autonomy. All of these efforts help to give students a sense of "ownership" of their learning and thereby add to their sense of *agency* and *identity*.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Your students are in the first week or so of a beginning language class, and their ability is limited to a few words and phrases. How might what you say and do, what students say and do, and some of the activities all reflect a learner-centered approach? Remember, your students are beginners with limited language. Can yours still be a learner-centered classroom?

Task-Based Language Teaching

One of the most prominent perspectives within the CLT framework is **Task-Based Language Teaching** (TBLT). Ellis (2003) asserted that TBLT is at the very heart of CLT by placing the use of tasks at the core of language teaching. In Nunan's (2014) words, "CLT addresses the question *why*? TBLT answers the question *how*?" (p. 458). While there is a good deal of variation among experts on how to describe or define a **task**, Peter Skehan's (1998a, p. 95) concept of task still captures the essentials. The following lists the attributes of a successful task.

Characteristics of Effective Tasks

- meaning is primary
- there is a communication problem to solve
- there is a relationship to comparable real-world activities
- task completion has some priority
- the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome

Perhaps more simply put, "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001, p. 11). A task may comprise several techniques. For example, a problem-solving task may include the techniques of grammatical explanation, teacher-initiated questions, small group-work, and an oral reporting procedure. Tasks are usually "bigger" in their ultimate ends than techniques.

Task-based teaching makes an important distinction between **target tasks**, which students must accomplish beyond the classroom, and **pedagogical tasks**, which form the nucleus of the classroom activity. Target tasks are not unlike the functions of language that are listed in Notional-Functional Syllabuses (see Chapter 2, here, and Chapter 8 of *PLLT*). For example, "giving personal information" is a communicative function for language, and an appropriately stated target task might be "giving personal information in a job interview." Notice that the task specifies a context.

Pedagogical tasks include any of a series of techniques designed ultimately to teach students to perform the target task. The ultimate pedagogical task usually involves students in some form of simulation of the target task itself (say, through a role-play simulation in which certain roles are assigned to learners). More elaborate tasks might involve planning an itinerary for a trip (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 149), which requires consulting transportation routes, ascertaining hotel rates, deciding on the best sights to see, and mapping out daily schedules.

a sequence of techniques



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Suppose you have been asked to teach a unit to intermediate-level learners (choose any context) in which the ultimate task was for small groups to each present an advertisement for a tour of Antarctica. What are some of the pedagogical tasks that might be important to include as steps toward the ultimate goal of the unit?

Pedagogical tasks are distinguished by their specific objectives that cumulatively point beyond the language classroom to the target task. They may, however, include both formal and functional techniques. A pedagogical task designed to teach students to give personal information in a job interview might, for example, involve

1. exercises in comprehension of *wh*- questions with *do*-insertion ("When do you work at Macy's?").
2. drills in the use of frequency adverbs ("I usually work until five o'clock.").
3. listening to extracts of job interviews.
4. analyzing the grammar and discourse of the interviews.
5. modeling a typical interview protocol.
6. role-playing a simulated interview with students in pairs.

While you might be tempted to consider only the ultimate task (#6) as the one fulfilling the criterion of pointing beyond the classroom to the real world, all of the techniques build toward enabling the students to perform the final technique.

A task-based curriculum, then, specifies what a learner needs to do with the English language in terms of target tasks and organizes a series of pedagogical tasks intended to reach those goals. An important criterion in task-based curricula is pedagogical soundness in the development and sequencing of tasks. The teacher and curriculum planner are called upon to consider communicative dimensions such as goal, input from the teacher, interaction, teacher and learner roles, and assessment (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 2003; Nunan, 2004, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2006b).

Task-based instruction is not a new method. Rather, it puts task at the center of one's methodological focus. It views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve, the purposes of which extend beyond the practice of language for its own sake.

Research on task-based learning has pursued the following objectives (Van den Branden, 2006; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Kim 2009; Robinson, 2011):

- identifying types of tasks that enhance learning (such as open-ended, structured, teacher-fronted, small group, and pair work)
- defining task-specific learner factors (for example, roles, proficiency levels, and styles)
- examining teacher roles and other variables that contribute to successful achievement of objectives
- specifying task complexity

Task-based instruction is a perspective within a CLT framework that urges you to carefully consider all the techniques that you use in the classroom in terms of a number of important pedagogical purposes:

Characteristics of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

- Tasks ultimately point learners beyond the forms of language alone to real-world contexts.
- Tasks specifically contribute to the communicative goals of learners.
- Their elements are carefully designed and not simply haphazardly or idiosyncratically thrown together.
- Their objectives are well specified so that you can at some later point accurately determine the success of one task over another.
- Tasks engage learners, at some level, in genuine problem-solving activity.

Theme-Based Instruction

When language courses are organized around meaningful situations or topics, they may be said to be **theme-based**, sometimes referred to as **topic-based** curricula. Theme-based instruction provides an organizing framework for a language course that transcends formal or structural requirements in a curriculum. Theme-based curricula can serve multiple interests of students in a classroom and can offer a focus on *content* while still adhering to institutional requirements for, let's say, coverage of grammatical criteria. Brinton (2013) puts theme-based teaching under the rubric of content-based language teaching (to be discussed below), but cautiously notes that there are variations in interpretation of the model (p. 4).

So, for example, an intensive English course for intermediate pre-university students might deal with topics of current interest such as public health, environmental awareness, or world economics. In the classroom students read articles or chapters, view video programs, discuss issues, propose solutions, and carry out writing assignments on a given *theme*, but the primary focus of the curriculum is not on *content* (e.g., medicine, business, science workplace)

Numerous current L2 textbooks, especially at the intermediate to advanced levels, offer theme-based courses of study. Challenging topics in these textbooks engage the curiosity and increase motivation of students as they grapple with an array of real-life issues ranging from simple to complex and also improve their linguistic skills across all four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Consider just one of an abundance of topics that have been used as themes through which language is taught: *environmental awareness and action*. With

this topic, you are sure to find immediate intrinsic motivation—we all want to survive! Here are some possible theme-based activities:

- Use environmental statistics and facts for classroom reading, writing, discussion, and debate.
- Carry out research and writing projects.
- Have students create their own environmental awareness material.
- Arrange field trips.
- Conduct simulation games.

In these activities, all four skills are actively in use. Students can get excited about solutions to real problems, some of which may be uncomfortably “close to home.” They can use language for genuine communicative purposes, and are actively involved in learner-centered collaboration. And they can absorb a surprising number of “required” linguistically based curricular objectives.

Experiential and Project-Based Learning

In yet another of the many facets of CLT-inspired perspectives on language teaching, **experiential learning** offers a dimension that may not necessarily be implied in the concepts already discussed here. Experiential learning, also known as **project-based learning**, highlights giving students *concrete experiences* in which they must use language in order to fulfill the objectives of a lesson (Eyring, 1991; Stoller, 2006). Both models include activities that contextualize language, integrate skills, and point toward authentic, real-world purposes, as in the following examples:



EXAMPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL AND PROJECT-BASED ACTIVITIES

- hands-on projects (e.g., constructing a diorama)
- field trips and other on-site visits (e.g., to a factory or museum)
- research projects (e.g., the value of solar power)
- extra-class dinner groups (e.g., learning about Vietnamese cuisine)
- creating a video advertising a product (e.g., organic fruit)

Experiential learning emphasizes the psychomotor aspects of language learning by involving learners in physical actions into which language is subsumed and reinforced. Through action, students are drawn into a utilization of multiple skills. The educational foundations of experiential learning lie in the advantages of “learning by doing,” discovery learning, and inductive learning.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Imagine a unit in an L2 that involves advanced adult students in a research project on nuclear nonproliferation (disarming countries of nuclear weapons). What might some of the objectives (across all four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing) be for such a unit? What pedagogical tasks could you see being used in this unit?

A specialized form of experiential learning that is still used in some circles is the **Language Experience Approach** (LEA) (Van Allen & Allen, 1967), an integrated-skills approach initially used in teaching native language reading skills, but more recently adapted to second language learning contexts. With widely varying adaptations, students’ personal experiences (a trip to the zoo, a movie, a family gathering at a park, etc.) are used as the basis for discussion, and then students, with the help of the teacher, write about the “experience,” which is preserved in the form of a “book.” The benefit of the LEA is in the intrinsic involvement of students in creating their own stories rather than being given other people’s stories. As in other experiential techniques, students are directly involved in the creative process of fashioning their own products, and all four skills are readily implied in carrying out a project.

Strategies-Based Instruction (Learning Strategies)

Ever since Paolo Freire (1970) and others introduced the concept of student *responsibility* for their own achievement of outcomes, educational theory has done an about-face across disciplines. In L2 pedagogy, one of the key foundation stones of successful instruction is enabling students to “learn how to learn.” That is, learners become **autonomous** through becoming aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and taking action in the form of strategic involvement in learning. (In the Chapter 4, we will expand on the principles of autonomy and investment.)

Implied in all the CLT-inspired approaches described so far in this chapter is the centrality of the learner. One of the most powerful ways that learners can “seize the day” in their journey to success is through what come to be called **strategic investment**. The learning of any skill involves a certain degree of investment of one’s time and effort. Every complex set of skills—like learning to play a musical instrument or a sport—is acquired through a combination of observing, focusing, practicing, monitoring, correcting, and redirecting.

Learning an L2 is no different. A language is probably the most complex set of skills one could ever seek to acquire; therefore, an investment is necessary

in the form of developing multiple layers of strategies for getting that language into one's brain. Building into your pedagogy ways for students to achieve this kind of strategic autonomy has come to be known as **strategies-based instruction** (SBI), also called *learning strategy training* (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013) as well as *learner development/training* (Wenden, 1998, 2002).

Several decades ago research began to show that successful learners engaged in certain practices that distinguished them from unsuccessful learners (Rubin & Thompson, 1982; Oxford, 1990). Among other characteristics, good language learners take charge of their own learning, seeking out opportunities to use the language, experiment with the L2, make guesses, use production tricks, allow errors to work for them, and learn from their mistakes.

In order for learners to become self-driven independent learners beyond the classroom, they must be fully *aware* of their own strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and styles, and be able to capitalize on that metacognition through the use of appropriate action in the form of strategic options. The importance of *awareness-raising* in language learning is well documented (Chamot, 2005; Cohen, 2011; Oxford, 2011). When learners are aware of their own capacities and limitations, they can efficiently adopt pathways to success that capitalize on strengths and compensate for weaknesses.

The effective implementation of SBI in language classrooms involves several steps and considerations (see Brown, 2014 for details):

1. stimulating awareness within learners of preferred styles
2. linking style to strategy with "strategic" techniques
3. providing extra-class assistance for learners

Stimulating Awareness

Most L2 learners are unaware of their own styles, preferences, and ways of addressing various problems. If they are aware, certainly very few have ever made the connection between these styles and learning an L2. So, what are some practical steps you can take toward awareness raising? Consider the following possibilities as a start.



STIMULATING AWARENESS OF LEARNERS' STYLES

- ask students to fill out informal self-checklists
- administer formal personality and cognitive style tests
- involve students in readings (e.g., Brown, 2002b) about styles
- introduce (define) and discuss various styles
- encourage "good" learning styles among learners



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Have you ever been in an L2 course in which the teacher has talked about or encouraged you to become aware of your styles (strengths, weaknesses, preferences)? As a teacher, how would you use a style awareness checklist? How might you introduce your students to various styles?

Among awareness-raising possibilities is attention to **multiple intelligences** in L2 learning. As summarized in *PLLT*, Chapter 4 (Brown, 2014), Gardner's (1983, 1999, 2004) model of intelligence includes at least eight types of intelligence, which has led educators to view a number of forms of "smartness" that learners can manifest. A learner who is strong, for example, in interpersonal intelligence may thrive in the context of group work and interaction, while a student who has high spatial intelligence will perform well with plenty of charts, diagrams, and other visuals. Most educators who follow an MI approach advocate the use of a multiplicity of types of activities and techniques in order to appeal to as wide a swath of learners as possible (Armstrong, 1994). Christison (2005) offered a compilation of 150 different activities for language learners, each emphasizing a specific intelligence, coded for age and proficiency level.

Linking Style and Strategy in the Classroom *(Learning Styles)*

Recent research has linked styles and strategies and discussed classroom implications of such connections (Cohen, 2011; Oxford, 2011; Wong & Nunan, 2011; Brown, 2014). Among the various suggestions in these sources for engaging in SBI is the concept of taking into account a student's style that may be working *against* him or her and gauging classroom techniques that will address those needs. Consider some ways to accomplish this in the Tips box (from Brown, 2014) on the next page.

Purpura (2014) adds a further dimension to strategy training by considering the various *stages* of processing that learners go through. For example, processing new input involves a comprehending process that consists of attending, decoding, noticing, and clarifying. The same strategies to be applied at this stage are far different from those at, say, response preparation and generation (output), which come only after intake, storage, and retrieval have taken place. Others (Brown, 2002b; Oxford, 2011) have built on this observation by distinguishing among strategies for comprehension and production, remembering, monitoring, and sociocultural awareness, among many other subcategories.



COMPENSATING FOR STYLES THAT MAY BE WORKING AGAINST LEARNERS

To lower inhibitions

Guessing games and communication games
Role plays, skits, and songs
Group and pair work
Humor, fun, laughter, enjoyment
Students share their fears in small groups

To encourage risk taking

Praise students for making sincere efforts to try out language
Use fluency exercises where errors are not corrected at that time
Extra-class collaborative projects

To build students' self-confidence

Tell and show students that you believe in them
Students make lists of their strengths
Students enumerate goals accomplished

An increasing number of L2 textbooks are offering guidelines and exercises for strategy awareness and practice within the stream of a chapter. Brown's (2000) *New Vistas* series for ESL learners offered examples of embedding strategy work within the exercises of a textbook. In another series of textbooks (Sarosy & Sherak, 2006), for academic listening, students' attention is drawn to cues for listening accurately to a lecture, for example, by attending to language that signals sequences of points, the "big picture," and a new idea or topic. Similarly, Chamot, O'Malley, and Kupper (1992) included strategy training modules in each unit.

Providing Extra Class Assistance

A third step toward building students' strategic awareness and awareness can be implemented beyond the classroom. Teachers can issue challenges to students to implement certain strategies that have been practiced in the classroom, and bring reports of their successes back to share with classmates. Self-help study guides (Marshall, 1989; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Brown, 2002) tend to have short, easy-to-understand chapters with information, anecdotes, tips, and exercises that will help learners to use strategies successfully beyond the language classroom. Excellent opportunities for authentic communication are available in the social media, and even though texting, tweeting, blogging, and Facebook posts are replete with nonstandard language, strategic investment may still reap benefits.

We will be spiraling TLT, SBI, and other CLT-inspired approaches into numerous examples in the rest of this book, as we look at more specific pedagogical basics

in the chapters to come. We have so far just provided a sketch of the variety of outgrowth in the last few decades of the CLT "era."

Other Collaborative Approaches

Several other pedagogical approaches in the latter part of the twentieth century featured collaboration, interaction, and cooperation among learners in the classroom. We'll take a brief look at three such models, all within the principles of CLT, variations of which are present in many L2 classrooms today.

Cooperative learning, as opposed to viewing learners as individuals on a solitary quest for success, incorporated principles of learner-centered instruction. As students work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come to each other's aid. They are a "team" whose players must work together in order to achieve goals successfully. According to the research (Oxford, 1997; McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva, 2006), in such a milieu, learners typically show heightened self-efficacy and identity, lowered anxiety, and in their communities of practice are able to nurture relationships among classmates.

Included among some of the challenges of cooperative learning are accounting for individual learning styles, personality differences, and possible over-reliance on the first language (Crandall, 1999). Further, virtually any models that feature **collaboration**—in which students and teachers work together to pursue goals—promote communities of learners that cut across the usual hierarchies of students and teachers, necessitating a cautious approach in cultures with strong power distance norms between teachers and students (Oxford, 1997, p. 443).

It almost goes without saying that communicative classrooms by definition are interactive. The extent to which *intended* messages are received is a factor of both one's production and the listener's/reader's reception. Most meaning, in a semantic sense, is a product of negotiation, of give and take, as interlocutors attempt to communicate. Thus, the communicative purpose of language compels us to create opportunities for genuine *interaction* in the classroom. An interactive course exhibits the following features, to name a few:

Characteristics of Interactive Language Teaching

- doing a significant amount of pair work and group work
- receiving authentic language input in real-world contexts
- producing language for genuine, meaningful communication
- performing classroom tasks that prepare Ss for actual language use beyond the classroom
- practicing oral communication through the give and take and spontaneity of actual conversations
- writing to and for real audiences, not contrived ones

The theoretical foundations of interactive learning lie in what Long (1985, 1996) described as the **interaction hypothesis** of second language acquisition (see *PLLT*, Chapter 10). Long and others have pointed out the importance of input *and* output in the development of language. As learners interact with each other through oral and written discourse, their communicative abilities are enhanced.

Another example of a collaborative approach was found in **whole language education**, which emphasized the interconnections between oral and written language. Interpretations and variations of this model were so divergent, however, that its impact soon waned (Rigg, 1991; Edelsky, 1993). Nevertheless the model offered three important insights that are worthy of mention.

- Language is not the sum of its many dissectible and discrete parts.
- Integrate the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).
- Language is a system of social practices that both constrain and liberate.

These insights underscore some key principles of L2 pedagogy. First, L1 acquisition research shows us that children begin perceiving “wholes” (sentences, emotions, intonation patterns) well before “parts.” Teachers might therefore help their students attend to such wholes, resisting the temptation to build language only from the bottom up. Second, because the four skills are interrelated, beware of assuming that the skills are easily separable. And finally, in the words of Edelsky (1993, p. 548), whole language education is a perspective “anchored in a vision of an equitable, democratic, diverse society.” Part of our job as teachers is to empower our learners to seize their *agency*, and to master whatever social, political, or economic forces might otherwise constrain them.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Edelsky (1993) made quite a jump from *whole language* to the *social* nature of language and language learning. In your learning of an L2, to what extent do you feel that you learned a “system of social practices”? If so, were you aware of such learning at the time? What are some examples of *social practices* that you as a teacher might include in your curriculum? How can you as a teacher help your students to be *empowered* through learning an L2?

SPECIFIC APPROACHES

All the above general approaches may to a great extent be implemented in any language course regardless of context. In the next few descriptions of CLT-based approaches in this chapter, we will focus on models that are more limited

in their applicability and feasibility. Certain conditions must apply in order to render them relevant and viable. Some contextual constraints are age-related or institutionally determined, others vary by course goals or proficiency, and still others are embedded in sociopolitical and sociocultural constraints. Let's look at some of these options.

Content-Based Language Teaching

Yaling is a Chinese child of eight who completed second grade in China and now, as her parents have just moved to Japan, she finds herself in a new country learning a new language. There is no special Japanese language class in Yaling's new elementary school in Osaka, so her parents place her in a regular third grade class, hoping that her intelligence, determination, and outgoing personality will pay off. Ultimately, Yaling manages, with a fair amount of difficulty in the first few months, to learn third grade subject matter as she simultaneously acquires Japanese.

Yaling was lucky. Parental support and better than average intelligence propelled her along. Others might have benefitted from some form of **content-based language teaching** (CBLT) to assist in the process of concurrently learning subject matter and a new language. CBLT can come in many forms and interpretations, and sometimes the definitions and boundaries among CBLT and its “cousins” are blurred by “competing claims in the literature” (Brinton, 2013, p. 1). So, it may be easier to think of CBLT as “an umbrella term for a multifaceted approach to second or foreign language teaching that...shares a common point of departure—the integration of language teaching aims with content instruction” Snow (2014, p. 439).

More specifically, according to Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989, p. vii), CBLT refers to “the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material.” Such an approach contrasts sharply with many practices in which language skills are taught virtually in isolation from substantive content. When language becomes the medium to convey informational content of interest and relevance to the learner, then learners are pointed toward matters of meaningful concern. Language takes on its appropriate role as a vehicle for accomplishing a set of content goals.

A surge of interest in CBLT in the late twentieth century resulted in widespread adoption of content-based curricula around the world, as chronicled by Brinton (2003), Stoller (2004), Schlepppegrell et al. (2004), and others. Content-based classrooms have the potential of yielding an increase in intrinsic motivation and empowerment, because students are focused on subject matter that is important to their lives. And as they center their interest on mastery of subject matter, they are concurrently acquiring linguistic ability.

The challenges of CBLT range from a demand for a whole new genre of textbooks and other materials to the training of language teachers to teach the concepts and skills of various disciplines, professions, and occupations. Allowing the subject matter to control the selection and sequencing of language

items means that you have to view your teaching from an entirely different perspective. You are first and foremost teaching science or math, for example, and secondarily teaching language. So you may have to become a double expert! Some team-teaching models of content-based teaching alleviate this potential drawback by linking subject-matter teachers and language teachers. Such an undertaking is what Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) describe as an **adjunct model** of content-based instruction.

Can content-based teaching take place at all levels of proficiency, even beginning levels? While it is possible to argue, for example, that certain basic survival skills are themselves content-based and that a beginning level class could therefore be content-based, such an argument extends the content-based notion beyond its normal bounds. CBLT usually pertains to academic or occupational instruction over an *extended* period of time at intermediate-to-advanced proficiency levels. Talking about renting an apartment one day, shopping the next, getting a driver's license the next, and so on, is certainly useful and meaningful for beginners, but would more appropriately fall into the category of a *task-based* or *theme-based* curriculum, as discussed above.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

At the beginning of this section, Yaling's adjustment at the age of 8 into a Japanese elementary school system was described. If you were her third-grade teacher, what kinds of assistance could you give to Yaling in her first few weeks of the school year? How might you involve parents, technology, or other students in your quest to help her to master the *content* of the curriculum?

Immersion and Sheltered Models

Over the years CBLT has been linked with several related models of education that, because of their uniqueness, deserve separate mention here.

Immersion models of language teaching began half a century ago in Canada and the United States with programs that sought more intensive instruction in French and Spanish, respectively, for native-English-speaking children in elementary school. Immersion models typically provide the majority of subject-matter content through the medium of the L2, thus the name "immersion." According to years of documentation (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011), immersion programs have been highly successful, with children performing on a par with their monolingual counterparts and becoming functional bilinguals by the end of elementary school. Immersion models have since sprung up in other countries: China, Hong Kong, Hungary, Finland, and Spain, among others (Snow, 2014).

Sheltered models of education involve "the deliberate separation of L2 students from native speakers of the target language for the purpose of content instruction" (Snow, 2014, p. 441). For L2 students whose language proficiency is not quite able to handle subject-matter content in the L1 of the educational system, they provide opportunities for them to master content standards with added language assistance. In such cases, the teacher of a school subject (say, science or history) modifies the presentation of material to help L2 learners process the content. Pre-teaching difficult vocabulary, suggesting reading comprehension strategies, explaining certain grammatical structures, and offering form-focused feedback are among techniques that have shown to be helpful (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012).

Bilingual Education

Among the multiplicity of communicative approaches to L2 instruction that have appeared over the last several decades is a cluster of models all of which may be classified as bilingual approaches. However, that "cluster" contains so many variations that some caution is in order, lest bilingual education be thought of as a single approach.

McGroarty and Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2014) define **bilingual education** as an approach in which "two languages are used as media of classroom instruction for the same group of students so that students receive some of their instruction in one language and some in the other, with the proportion of each language varying according to program type, instructional goals, and various contextual influences" (p. 503).

Researchers and practitioners alike are careful to explain the many forms that bilingual education has taken in elementary school, secondary school, and higher education, as well as in the context of language-majority and language-minority students (Kroon & Vallen, 2010; Garcia, 2013). Options at the elementary level, for example, can range from *early-exit*, or *transitional* programs (students are placed for a limited number of years in a bilingual classroom, until they are *mainstreamed*), to *developmental*, or *maintenance* programs (the child's L1 is maintained throughout the duration of the program). At the higher education level, language for specific purposes (see below) and content-based immersion programs may also fall into the category of bilingual education.

Worldwide, bilingual education has been shown to be effective in many contexts (Baker, 2011), in spite of the many forms and models it has taken over the years. Unfortunately, in the United States bilingual education has been highly politicized, and with inaccurate data reported by self-interests, "often based on ignorance and misunderstanding" (McGroarty & Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2014, p. 513), it has faced strong opposition. Elsewhere there is better news. The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), for example, representing 48 countries, supports multilingualism as a group

right, a means for political cohesion, and cross-cultural understanding (Baetens Beardsmore, 2009; Huhta, 2013). We'll return to this issue in Chapter 8.

Workplace and Vocational L2 Instruction

The last couple of decades of the twentieth century saw a surge of interest in language instruction within the context of the workplace: factories, restaurants, hotels, retail stores, and offices, to name a few examples. **Workplace L2 instruction** offers distinct advantages by tailoring language to the specific linguistic needs of carrying out one's duties "on the job." Workers engaged in housekeeping services in hotels, for example, can in an hour or two a week of classroom instruction learn to comprehend basic vocabulary (e.g., towel, sheet, pillow), useful phrases ("I need an extra towel"), produce appropriate responses ("I'll bring an extra pillow"), and even read simple messages left by hotel guests ("Please repair the air conditioning") (Holloway, 2013).



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

You have no doubt experienced moments when a worker in a hotel you're staying in says something (maybe in a language you don't know, or maybe just in your L1, but with an accent that's hard to understand) you cannot decipher. Judging from those experiences, what are some words or phrases that you might teach those workers in order to communicate with customers?

Administrative challenges are sometimes an obstacle in that businesses are asked to provide instruction as part of the paid contract of a worker. Employees themselves may need to be convinced of the benefits of going to classes. And of course, instructors need to be paid and classroom space provided at the job site. Offsetting such potential obstacles are the ultimate "soft skills" (etiquette, customer relations) acquired by workers, which has been shown to raise the self-efficacy of employees as well as the company's reputation for service (Johns & Price, 2014).

Workplace programs intersect with what has come to be known as **vocational L2 instruction**, all of which may be subsumed under the category or languages for special purposes (see the next section). Many vocational programs differ in that they are part of an adult education program that provides pre-employment language training, and this typically includes basic academic language skills. Because students are anticipating entering the job market, interviewing and other skills for gaining employment are included in the curriculum. In English-speaking countries, **Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)** courses typically combine basic literacy education with specialized occupational contexts, are

geared toward a single occupation or multiple occupations, and are gauged for several levels of language ability (Johns & Price, 2014).

Languages for Specific Purposes

(Nutrition/Technical)

Workplace and vocational approaches to L2 instruction are forms of what is generically referred to as **languages for specific purposes (LSP)**, or in the case of English, **English for specific purposes (ESP)** (Master, 2005). This genre of L2 instruction is commonly associated with higher education, and has offshoots in **English for academic purposes (EAP)** (Hamp-Lyons, 2011), as well as in specialized English courses in, for example, the fields of science and technology (EST), business and economics (EBE), and medicine (EMP), in the case of international students studying in English-speaking countries.

You have no doubt experienced differences in the use of language, especially in vocabulary choice and discourse conventions, depending on the subject matter involved. A laboratory report of a chemistry experiment carries with it certain expectations in form and function, and those often bear little resemblance to a marketing analysis for a manufacturing company. Once learners have progressed beyond intermediate stages in their L2, they are usually both prepared and motivated to accomplish tasks in a chosen vocation or profession.

In the words of Johns (2010, p. 318), "in LSP, the *authentic* world must be brought to the students, and they must learn to interact with the language as it is spoken or written in target situations." Those target situations are the specific disciplines being pursued by students. Some of the advantages of LSP may be obvious, notably, acquiring knowledge and skills of one's chosen field of study along with developing the linguistic ability needed for such an accomplishment. A less immediately obvious advantage lies in the concept of *identity* (to be discussed further in the next two chapters). "LSP students' identities are both negotiated and developed as they increase their participation in particular communities of practice" (Paltridge & Starfield, 2011, p. 107). Such a view provides a richer conceptualization of students as potential members of a larger community, learning to participate more significantly in shifting power relationships (Belcher & Lukkarila, 2011).

As LSP courses and models have evolved over the last five decades, several important offshoots of LSP have emerged. The growth of research on *genre* analysis (the study of linguistic and discourse variations in text types) has led to **genre-based pedagogy** (Paltridge, 2001; Johns, 2002, 2010; Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2013). Such an approach could present students with common genres in a wide variety of professional or occupational communities: e-mails, memos, letters, minutes of meetings, research reports, abstracts, texting, and blogging, for example. More specifically, genre-based pedagogy focuses students on discipline-specific genres, such as laboratory reports, travel brochures, financial reports, drug dosage precautions, essays, or newspaper articles.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

Let's say you have been asked to teach a unit to advanced L2 students in a marketing course on "writing travel advertisements." What are some of the words, phrases, and discourse styles that you would need to include, in order for your students to be able to construct such a genre?

Corpus-Based Teaching

Let's look at one more approach, which could easily be subsumed under LSP, but because of the widespread applications of corpus research, it deserves a special category.

Corpus analysis (also known as **corpus linguistics**) is a computerized approach to linguistic research that stores and analyzes written and/or spoken texts in electronic form (Conrad, 2005). Corpora can be looked at in terms of syntax, lexicon, discourse, along with varieties of language, genres, dialects, styles, and registers (Johns, 2002; Silberstein, 2011). In written form, corpora can be classified into academic, journalistic, or literary prose, among others, and spoken corpora have been classified into conversations of many kinds: everyday conversation among friends, theater/television scripts, speeches, and even classroom language (Biber & Conrad, 2001; Conrad, 2005; McEnery & Xiao, 2011).

Within the broad scope of LSP, **corpus-based teaching** has added many advantages for curriculum and textbook writers as well as teachers in their daily methodological routines. Among the many corpora available today, subcategories include genres such as academic presentations, lectures, interviews, and textbooks, along with study group discussions, office hour conversations, and academic word lists (Paltridge & Starfield, 2011; Keck, 2013). This kind of research has clear benefits as it provides at one's fingertips (literally!) hundreds of millions of instances of words, phrases, and collocations all classified within a linguistic context of co-occurring words before and after the target item. At times social or discourse *contexts* may be difficult to discern, but recent developments have even been able to add certain contextual features into corpus studies (Paltridge & Starfield, 2011).

The benefits of corpus analysis extend well beyond LSP. Curriculum designers and materials developers in all contexts have access to *naturally* occurring language subcategorized into specific varieties, styles, registers, and genres. In lieu of "inventing" possibly inauthentic phrases, collocations, and sentences to illustrate linguistic specifications, these materials can present "real" language (McEnery & Xiao, 2011). A case in point is Walker's (2012) textbook on academic English vocabulary, which is based on the standard corpus-based

Academic Word List in which lexical and grammatical factors are linked and vocabulary presented in *context*. Similarly, Chapelle and Jamieson (2008) have offered useful "tips" that teachers can use in incorporating corpus research into language classrooms. (See Chapter 12 in this book for further discussion of the use of technology in L2 classrooms, including the use of corpus data.)

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

Log onto the *Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus* pearsonlongman.com/Dictionaries/corpus/index.html and look up some entries of your choice, but try some less common words to limit the number of instances. You could look up "genre" or "immersion," for example. Using the collocations you find there, design a few fill-in-the-blank exercises for intermediate to advanced students of English.

A methodological approach that has been considerably buoyed by the recent surge of corpus analysis is Michael Lewis's (1993, 1997, 2000) **Lexical Approach**. Building on the hypothesis that the essential building blocks of language are words and word combinations, Lewis maintained that one can do almost anything in a language with vocabulary, and therefore emphasized lexical phrases, or **collocations**, as central to a language course. Phrases like *not so good*, *how's it going*, and *I'll be in touch* are useful patterns for a learner to internalize along with predicable collocations like *do my homework*, . . . *the laundry*, . . . *a good job*, and *make*. . . *some coffee*, . . . *my bed*, . . . *a promise*.

A lexical emphasis has some obvious advantages. It remains somewhat unclear, however, how such an approach differs from other approaches (which certainly allow for a focus on lexical units). Nor is it clear how "an endless succession of phrase-book utterances, 'all chunks but no pineapple,' . . . can be incorporated into the understanding of a language system" (Harmer, 2001, p. 92).



In this chapter we have presented most of the major communicative approaches being used worldwide today. As you read further in this book, and as we focus more specifically on classroom lessons and activities, we'll be illustrating many of these approaches in concrete examples.

Meanwhile, a word of warning: Virtually all of the approaches and models described here might appear to be "buzzwords" or even "designer" models, in the same way that methods were depicted in the previous chapter. We claim that is *not* the case, however, because the approaches described here are the

product of well-researched, time-tested, globally relevant methodological practices. In the next chapter, we invite you to discover why we think so, as we present basic *foundational principles* of language teaching on which each of the models can be evaluated and appraised. See for yourself!

FOR THE TEACHER: ACTIVITIES (A) & DISCUSSION (D)

Note: For each of the "Classroom Connections" in this chapter, you may wish to turn them into individual or pair-work discussion questions.

1. (D) Ask your students for concrete examples of the dysfunction of dichotomizing *theory* and *practice*. What's wrong with trained, expert researchers carrying out studies on SLA even if they have never taught in an L2 classroom? How is a teacher supposed to carry out systematic research if he or she has never been trained to do so? How might researchers and teachers productively cooperate?
2. (D) Review the notion that one's overall *approach* to language teaching can directly lead to curriculum design and lesson techniques, without necessarily subscribing to a *method*, as the term was used in the previous chapter. Ask your class how they might now understand the term *methodology* to refer to pedagogical *practice* in general? Alternatively, ask them to verbalize the difference between *method* and *methodology*.
3. (A) Divide your class into groups of 3 or 4 each and ask them to share any "horror" stories they have experienced in L2 classes that were (like the example of "Gary" on page 45) so authoritarian, strict, scary, or intimidating that they stifled learner-centered spontaneity and creativity. Then ask them to suggest how they might have *changed* that climate if they were teaching that class today. Ask for brief group oral reports of a few of their stories.
4. (A) In pairs, have students write down a few phrases to describe each of the following *general* CLT approaches:
 - learner-centered instruction
 - task-based language teaching
 - theme-based instruction
 - experiential/project-based learning
 - strategies-based instruction

Ask them to share with their partner some examples from personal experience (learning or teaching) of approaches they have just defined. Then solicit a few examples to be reported to the class as a whole.

5. (A) In the same pairs, assign to each pair one of the 6 different *specific approaches* discussed in the last part of this chapter. Then have them brainstorm a few phrases to describe their approach, write their findings on the board, and provide a brief oral explanation to the rest of the class. The purpose of this activity is simply to review the many approaches covered in the

chapter. If any students have learned or taught an L2 within any of the models, ask them to briefly describe and evaluate their experience.

6. (A) In anticipation of Chapter 4, in which readers will encounter eight principles of language learning and teaching, ask students to brainstorm, in small groups, some assertions about language learning that one might include in a description of an approach to language teaching. For example, what would they say about the issues of age and acquisition, inhibitions, how to best store something in memory, and the relationship of intelligence to second language success? Direct the groups to come up with axioms or principles that would be relatively stable across many acquisition contexts. Then, as a whole class, list these on the board.

FOR YOUR FURTHER READING

Task-based ①

Theme-based ②

Experiential + ly ③

Strategy-based ④

Cooperative learning

Content-based ⑤

communicative language teaching

...sive view of classrooms
include teaching listening
reading, and writing, all

...ing. In M. Celce-Murcia, D.
...a second or foreign language
...eographic Learning.

...conceptual underpinnings,
...f TBLT in action.

...of reference. In C. Chapelle
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...on European Framework
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...earch on its applications

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Most of the CLT approaches described in this chapter are explained in some detail across the chapters of this volume. A useful guide to research summaries, practical applications, and bibliographic references in each approach.